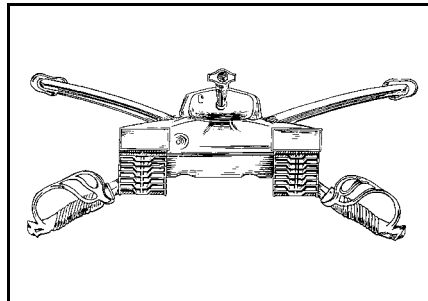




An early January issue of *The New York Times* featured a horrifying front page photograph of the charred torso of a Russian armored vehicle crewman, rendered *hors de combat* in the Chechnya conflict. His blackened upper body rested halfway out of the hatch, the agonized face mercifully undefinable, his hands reaching upward — perhaps in a desperate last grasp at some unseen rescuer who never came — perhaps to his Creator. It is a stark reminder to all armor and cavalymen of just how dangerous our business really is.

I've always believed that in a democratic republic the soldier's job is to fight where he or she is sent, and the civilian's job is to keep us out of fights where we don't belong. Since we can't pick and choose where we will fight, we depend upon the sound judgement of our elected officials to make the right decisions regarding use of military force. If you believe the news reports, many of the Russian soldiers sent into Chechnya don't want to be there; but because they are professional soldiers, they carry out the orders of their commander-in-chief. Once he is committed to combat, whether he wants to be there or not is irrelevant—the risk is the same to the soldier, for the consequences depicted in that stark photo are self-propelled and are subject to no man's desires. The only thing that can affect the outcome of battle, once committed to it, is TRAINING, LEADERSHIP, AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEPENDABILITY; and



right now, the Russians are receiving some harsh press as to their tactical performance against a foe that is determined to fight to the death. And while the politicians may argue over the right and wrong of intervening in Chechnya, the specter of death will continue to occupy the front page of newspapers around the world largely because of a decline in those critical areas of military competency.

I hope that never happens to us in our rush to save a dollar as we shrink the U.S. military. And I don't know about you, but I'd like to see that photograph posted in the office of every U.S. Congressman just to remind them of the terrible price of war.

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At this year's Armor Conference here at Fort Knox, we will discuss those three critical areas of training, leadership and technology, and we'll examine where we've been, where we are, and where we're going as an Armored Force. It's a challenging time of fast-breaking technology and ever-changing force structure, and it behooves each of us as professional soldiers to either keep-up or get out of the way. Attend the Armor Conference if you can, and if you can't, find out what happened from someone who did. I hope to see you there.

— J.D. Brewer

By Order of the Secretary of the Army:

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